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Letter dated 21 September 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the comments and observations on the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran (A/73/299) (see annex).

It would be appreciated if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 74 (c).

(*Signed*) Gholamali **Khoshroo**
Ambassador
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Annex to the letter dated 21 September 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Comments and observations by the Islamic Republic of Iran on the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran (A/73/299)

1. The report, A/73/299, yet again brings to light manipulation and politicization that exist in the United Nations human rights mechanisms. Producing annually four nearly identical reports on the situation of human rights in Iran should solely be attributed to the adoption of a harmful selective approach based on double standards, an approach that further erodes the integrity and credibility of the United Nations human rights mechanisms. Beyond political considerations, there is no credible ground for the duplication of allegations against Iran four times a year. The report under question is the result of a counterproductive mandate, which makes it objectionable in its entirety, notwithstanding its attempt to reflect, though partially and with reluctance, the comments provided on the report by Iran.

2. The report's adoption of a selective approach on the human rights of Iranians is disturbing. It is expected that reports of this nature be all-inclusive and address all of the human rights of the entire population without distinction. However, the report sounds as selective as the mandate itself. The reimposition of illegal and illegitimate sanctions against Iran after the unilateral withdrawal of the United States from the Iran nuclear deal, which was unanimously adopted by the Security Council with the support of the United States itself, was barely touched upon by the authors of the report. The genocidal sanctions indiscriminately violate the basic economic and social rights of ordinary Iranians, and yet the report chose not to even mention it.

3. Bearing in mind the observations of the Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights concerning the United States anti-Iranian sanctions, the absence in the report of any reflection on such an important issue is thought-provoking. It is worth recalling that the Special Rapporteur underlines that "these unjust and harmful sanctions are destroying the economy and currency of Iran, driving millions of people into poverty and making imported goods unaffordable". He further underscores that "the current system creates doubt and ambiguity which makes it all but impossible for Iran to import these urgently needed humanitarian goods. This ambiguity causes a 'chilling effect' which is likely to lead to silent deaths in hospitals as medicines run out." Apparently, the destiny and welfare of millions of Iranians does not even deserve a single paragraph in the whole 18-page report! It is also instructive to notice that, beyond the said Special Rapporteur, who has spoken out against this crime, other relevant mandate holders who regularly issue statements on Iran, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and others in the Secretariat are yet to express themselves on this apparent indiscriminate and genocidal mass violation of the human rights of Iranians.

4. Similar to previous reports, a large portion of the text is allocated to openly or tacitly defending criminals, armed drug dealers, terrorists, secessionists and spies, the same people who denied recognizing any right for their victims. If the authors were unable to defend the violated rights of these victims, they can at least avoid disrespecting them. The overwhelming attempt of the report to whitewash the vicious conduct of criminals against ordinary Iranian citizens is disturbing. Unfortunately, the grievances of the victims of these villains are left unheard. Seemingly, their human rights and voice were not worthy enough. The persistent inclination of the report in

questioning the Government's decisiveness and dedication in ensuring its citizens' safety and security is alarming.

5. Despite the fact that, since 2013, as also mentioned in the report, "some 43,000 demonstrations have been held across the Islamic Republic of Iran", the report still asserts "an intensified crackdown" on protesters! The figures indicate that almost 20 demonstrations have been held on a daily basis in the country. Holding such a high number of peaceful assemblies is a clear indication of a vibrant democratic and open society and a sign of strength. Iran's hypocrite critics and their clients are challenged to guarantee the same right for their own citizens! Furthermore, an overwhelming majority of the demonstrations were held in a peaceful environment. Like any rule-based society, calls for vandalism and destruction of public properties or the actual occurrence of such attacks are expected to be properly responded to by law enforcement officials. In the very few instances that such containment measures were put in place, maximum restraint was observed by police forces. The injuries inflicted on them were even greater than those of the vandals in some instances!

6. The weight put by the report on the situation of Iranians with dual nationality further highlights its double standard approach towards Iranians' human rights. Whilst hundreds of thousands of Iranians with dual nationality regularly visit their home country, the report conveniently disregards the fact that a few governments, in particular the United States, continue to exploit systematically the vulnerabilities of their citizens with Iranian backgrounds. In place of making misplaced judgments, the report could call for an end to the abuse of these individuals by governments who are engaging them in suspicious activities against Iran's national security. It is disappointing that the authors chose to target once more the Government for its endeavour to ensure the security of its citizens against external interference. Meanwhile, the destiny of tens of Iranians around the world who are in custody due to dubious and baseless accusations levelled against them by the United States government, i.e. violation of United States illegal sanctions, was again unworthy of attention for the authors of the report. The story of an innocent Iranian pregnant woman imprisoned in Australia and forced to give birth in prison who is still in custody was not interesting enough for them. Neither were the ceaseless sufferings of innocent Iranians living for years in custody despite their deteriorating health conditions and ageing.

7. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has earnestly pursued maintaining an open and dynamic media environment to ensure each citizen's safe and unhindered access to the Internet. The high number of active newspapers, media outlets, social media platforms and Internet users attests to such intention. Free and open media as well as social media networks routinely contribute to the decision-making processes across the political system. However, Iran is and has openly and fiercely been the target of vicious organized media warfare planned and funded by adversary governments from outside the country, notably the United States, the United Kingdom and Israel. Furthermore, thousands of fake accounts on social media platforms that run from outside of Iran systematically pump blind hate, fabricate false news and provoke disruption and destruction. In the past, Iranians have bitterly experienced the result of remaining indifferent to these well-funded, organized and ferocious campaigns that run against their national security and interest. It is regrettable that the report fails to duly recognize the ongoing open assault against Iranians through abusing media and the Internet platforms. Worse, the report even assumes that the security and privacy of Iranians could be better served if their data were stored in servers outside of Iran rather than inside the country!

8. The report fails to reflect a balanced and neutral account of the situation. It is clearly hesitant in recognizing and appreciating the positive policies undertaken by the Government and consequent developments. Its attempt to even disparage such

measures by questioning their relevance or effectiveness is disappointing. The lukewarm reaction of the report to the implementation of a major amendment to the drug-trafficking law is worth mentioning. Iran has seen thousands of its police officers lose their lives within the course of its relentless campaign against regional and international armed drug traffickers. Little was ever heard from the United Nations on their violated rights and on the ultimate price that they paid to combat the evil of addiction. However, the report does not even miss the opportunity to express its concern over the rights of armed drug dealers or those who use children to smuggle drugs that, according to the amended law, may still be subject to the death penalty if they get arrested.

9. Specific cases have been raised in the report that have been separately and extensively responded to in detail. However, the gravity of such cases, which are regrettable in their own place, do not warrant a country-specific report. No country can claim to be perfect; neither does Iran. There is always room and the possibility to improve practices as well as laws to the extent that they do not contradict the social norms acceptable to citizens. Obviously, no country can or is expected to abandon its laws just to curry favour with the few who wish to impose their way of living on others. As a matter of fact, the foundation of our laws is shared by almost all countries of the region that Iran is part of and their application extends beyond a single country or even region.

10. Mutual respect and dialogue serve as the right path to address any genuine concern regarding human rights. To enhance the credibility of human rights discourse, we seek respectful dialogue without recrimination or blame games and welcome meaningful engagement with all serious partners. President Rouhani's policy of constructive engagement with the world promises new horizons for dialogue-based cooperation, understanding and mutual respect in all fields, including human rights. In this context, the ongoing bilateral human rights dialogue and technical cooperation with several countries are noteworthy. As also recognized by the report, the Islamic Republic of Iran is committed to the universal periodic review while having extended its hands for further cooperation and dialogue to OHCHR. Iran is constructively engaged with human rights treaty body mechanisms as well as human rights thematic mandate holders. Iran continues to call for dialogue based on understanding, cooperation and mutual respect.